'THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALIST' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 32 April, 2011

EDITORIAL: The Club has been dismayed by the onslaught of natural disasters in recent months. The floods in Victoria during the summer caused serious damage to Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary, west of Ballarat. Some members visited this wonderful facility during the SEANA weekend held at Ballarat in March 2010 and it is distressing to know that years of hard work have been destroyed. Bird numbers have been in decline for a number of years and this latest threat will put further strain on populations.

On a lighter note, 2011 is the Club's 50th year and celebrations and activities are already taking place to mark this milestone. We hope as many members as possible, both present and past, will be able to attend at least some of the scheduled events. We look forward to seeing you and reminiscing about the good times over the last fifty years.

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Members exploring Elizabeth St Reserve, Anglesea Weekend 8-10 October 2010

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PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Bunyip State Park – 25th September 2010 - by Leader, Jackson Airey

Fourteen members were joined by 3 visiting members of the Peninsula FNC for our second September field trip. The location was Bunyip State Park which is SE of Melbourne.

We met at the Mortimer Picnic Ground and set off on the Mortimer Nature Trail. The first section of the walk starts in wet eucalypt forest then crosses the Gembrook-Tonimbuk Road. The other side of the road consists of riparian forest and heathy woodland with trees including Narrowleaf Peppermint, Messmate Stringybark, Brown Stringybark and Scented Paperbark.

Returning to the Mortimer Picnic Ground we had lunch. After lunch we drove in convoy to the Buttongrass Nature Trail. This trail travels through a wet heathland and includes Buttongrass, Hakeas, Wattles and Tea-trees. Southern Emu-wren are often seen in the Buttongrass but we were not lucky enough to see any today.

Although the forest was relatively quiet for birds, members saw many plants and some fungus in the distinct habitats that our walks travelled through.

Weekend Field Trip to Anglesea – 8th-10th October 2010

- by Leaders Alan and Hazel Veevers

Fine spring weather, beautiful flowers and rare birds were some of the ingredients of a most successful Club weekend in Anglesea.

On the Friday, 12 "early-birds" enjoyed a preview of what was to come. A leisurely walk to Edna Bowman Reserve revealed a variety of spring flowers including several spider and donkey orchids. Highlights of the return walk along the Surf Coast Track included a Blue-winged Parrot and Pink Fairy Orchids. At the beach Caspian Terns and a Hooded Plover were unusual sightings.

On Saturday morning, 21 members and 2 guests set off to visit several different venues in the Anglesea area. The heath at Elizabeth Street Reserve was a mass of flowering plants with white Everlasting Daisies forming a spectacular display. A walk at Coogoorah Park provided some interesting bird sightings including large flocks of Cormorants, a Swamp Harrier and a Dusky Woodswallow. Lunch was eaten at the Lookout Reserve where magnificent coastal views were enjoyed. A stroll around the reserve after lunch revealed some beautiful flowers and butterflies with a Striated Fieldwren providing musical entertainment.

Weekend Field Trip to Anglesea – 8th-10th October 2010 (cont)

The next venue was O'Donohue's Reserve where large numbers of orchids were seen, including some uncommon species. Unfortunately none of the sun orchids were flowering, the recent cold weather having delayed them. Towards the end of the day, some of the group drove to Airey's Inlet Sewerage Ponds to do some bird-watching. Sacred Kingfishers and Grey Teal with ducklings were highlights at this spot. The day ended with a splendid BBQ at which the day's activities and sightings were convivially discussed.

Sunday morning started with a walk on the beach at Point Roadknight, where the conditions were perfect, with sunshine and a light breeze. Unusual rock formations provided geological interest whilst a pair of Hooded Plovers with 3 chicks delighted everyone. It was a real thrill to see these endangered birds succeeding in raising their young. Fraser Avenue was the next venue, where a variety of orchids were observed as well as several interesting insect species. Loris Peggie then led the party to a site on Forest Road, which provided a magnificent orchid finale with Red Beaks, Hare Orchids and several types of spider orchid. The group then drove to the Ironbark Basin for lunch where they were visited by a pair of Scarlet Robins. Afterwards, some members walked around the Nature Trail and everyone visited the Point Addis lookouts where Rufous Bristlebirds were heard calling and were seen by a fortunate few.

Our thanks go to all the members for making this such a successful camp and especially to Loris Peggie for generously sharing her knowledge of the local area.

Field Trip to Crib Point – 24th October 2010

- by Leader Loris Peggie

The day was a little overcast at first when the group assembled at the meeting place at Crib Point where we were joined by members of the Mornington Peninsula Field Nats to look for sun orchids, any other orchids we could find, as well as birds and wildflowers which were really quite spectacular. The Pimelea and Love Creeper were the best I have seen for many years. The many eyes found quite a list of orchids as the day warmed up, but unfortunately the large mosquitoes were a real pest. Along with many of the plants, which were an exceptional size, so were the mossies.

Lunch was enjoyed at the Jacks Beach Reserve, followed by a walk to Woolleys Beach. Some members chose to take the board-walk towards Hastings to look for birds while others returned to see if the sun orchids were responding to the warming day. *Thelymitra media* and *Thelymitra aristata* were both very showy and *Thelymitra rubra* was better after lunch with more flowers open. The orchid group ended up visiting Lorna's Triangle Bushland Reserve but only spent a short time there, as it was fairly overgrown for orchid hunting, before saying farewell.

Visit to Castlemaine and surrounds – 13th November 2010

- by Leader David Hewitt

Eighteen members braved a seriously bad weather forecast and met near Castlemaine. We started at Living Stones Cafe & Skydancers Butterfly Garden where we were able to photograph five different butterflies mainly from Queensland (Monarch - *Danaus plexippus*, Common Crow - *Euploae cor*e, Varied Eggfly - *Hypolimnas bolina*, Caper White - *Belenois java teutonia* and Orchard Swallowtail - *Papilio aegeus*) in a very attractive garden setting.

For lunch we drove to the Muckleford Nature Conservation Reservation. Unfortunately the forecast heavy rain started to set in, but we did manage to find some hornet orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*) and some onion orchids (*Microtis parviflora*) as well as a somewhat bedraggled Caper White butterfly protecting itself from the weather. Unfortunately the weather kept most birds at bay. After lunch we set off for home, stopping in the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park at Rail Dam Track on the way. There we came across an impressive display of wildflower and orchids including masses of Hooded Caladenias (*Caladenia cucullata*), Brown-clubbed Spider orchids (*Caladenia phaeoclavia*), a Purple Beard orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*) and a number of Ranges Leek orchids (*Prasophyllum* sp. aff. *odoratum* 6).

Field Trip to Badger Weir - 15th January 2011

- by Leaders Graeme & Helen Fernandes and Ray Wall

On our first excursion for 2011 we were blessed with a beautiful sunny Saturday morning. Members met in the top car park adjacent to the Stringybark Track. As members arrived, morning tea and a chat about Christmas and the New Year was enjoyed by all.

For the first stage of our walk we set off along the Stringybark Track. This track had an excellent cover of ferns in the small gullies. From here the track rose slightly to rocky outcrops where the magnificent Stringybarks, (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*) are thriving. The Stringybark Track joins the Coranderrk Track which takes us along the Coranderrk Aqueduct up to Badger Weir. Along this track the mature forest of Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) can be seen. These mature aged trees are very important to retain as they provide homes and nesting sites for our native mammals and birds. Whilst some members were checking out the ferns, and looking for orchids and birds, a couple of eagle eyed members spotted some unusual butterflies. Some examples were: the Macleays' Swallowtail (*Graphium macleayanus*), the Small Grass Yellow (*Eurema smilax*) and the Lesser Wanderer (*Danaus chrysippus*), all unusual for this area.

From the weir we returned via the Aqueduct Track until we reached the Lyrebird Track, which took us along the meandering Badger Creek. Along this track in the gullies, are the beautiful tree ferns, some of which are over two hundred years old. Tree ferns are slow growers, only growing about two centimetres each year.

Fern species observed included: *Blechnum nudum, Cyathea australis, Dicksonia antarctica, Diplazium australe, Grammitis billardieri, Microsorum diversifolium* and *Polystichum proliferum.* After an excellent and interesting walk, we returned to the car-park. The day concluded with a leisurely lunch with the birds in the picnic area.

Field Trip to Reef Island – 12th February 2011

- by Leader Jackson Airey

Twenty RFNC members were joined by 7 members from the Peninsula Field Nats. Club at Reef Island in Western Port. This was a new location for an excursion for the club and most members hadn't been here before. We were very lucky with the weather as it was about 20 degrees and mostly cloudy with a southerly breeze.

Known to be an excellent wader spot in summer, we only saw small groups of Red-capped Plover and Red-necked Stint on the beach. Several Royal Spoonbill and quite a few White-faced Heron were seen on the water's edge and in the shallows. Moving onto the island, we had to be content with Spiny Spiders and several Checkered Swallowtails and Painted Ladies amongst the abundant Cabbage Whites, while the waders were proving elusive. Moving toward the rocky Northern shore we set up scopes and were finally able to get onto a mixed flock of waders: Red-necked Stint, Pacific Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone and Grey-tailed Tattler.

We pushed on to the end of the island and our persistence over the rocky ground paid off with better views of the previously seen waders along with several Curlew Sandpiper. The total numbers of birds seen was 25 species.

We all made our way back to the carpark and headed up the road to Coronet Bay for a late lunch. Members dispersed after lunch to make their own way home.

NATURE NOTES

Anglesea Weekend 8-10 October 2010 – Bird List – Jackson Airey

	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
Black Swan			●		Superb Fairy-wren	●	●	●	●
Australian Shelduck			●		Singing Honeyeater	●			
Australian Wood Duck	●	●	●		White-eared Honeyeater	●		●	
Pacific Black Duck	●	●			White-naped Honeyeater		●		●
Chestnut Teal	●	●			Brown-headed Honeyeater		●	●	
Grey Teal			●		New Holland Honeyeater	●	●		
Hardhead			●		Eastern Spinebill				●
Little Black Cormorant			●		Red Wattlebird	●	●	●	●
Great Cormorant	●	●	●	●	Little Wattlebird	●			
Little Pied Cormorant		●	●		Rufous Bristlebird				●
Great Egret	●	●			Spotted Pardalote	●	●		●
White-faced Heron		●	●		Striated Pardalote				●
Swamp Harrier		●			Striated Fieldwren	●			
Nankeen Kestrel	●				White-browed Scrubwren		●		●
Purple Swamphen		●			Buff-rumped Thornbill				●
Dusky Moorhen		●			Brown Thornbill	●		●	●
Eurasian Coot			●		Yellow-rumped Thornbill	●			
Masked Lapwing	●	●	●		Striated Thornbill	●		●	●
Hooded Plover	●				Australian Magpie	●			
Black-fronted Dotterel	●				Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	●			●
Silver Gull	●			●	Dusky Woodswallow		●	●	
Pacific Gull	●			●	Pied Currawong		●	●	●
Caspian Tern	●				Varied Sitella				●
Crested Tern	●				Golden Whistler			●	
Common Bronzewing			●		Rufous Whistler		●	●	●
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	●				Grey Shrike-thrush		●	●	●
Gang-gang Cockatoo	●			●	Olive-backed Oriole	●	●		●
Galah	●				Willie Wagtail	●		●	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	●	●	●		Grey Fantail	●	●	●	●
Crimson Rosella	●	●	●	●	Little Raven	●	●	●	●
Blue-winged Parrot	●			●	Scarlet Robin				●
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	●	●		●	Eastern Yellow Robin				●
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo		●			Welcome Swallow	●	●	●	●
Sacred Kingfisher			●		Australian Reed-warbler		●		
Laughing Kookaburra		●		●	Little Grassbird		●		
White-throated Treecreeper	●		●	●	Silvereye	●	●	●	●
						41	37	32	34

Ferals: Common Blackbird, Northern Mallard, Spotted Dove

1 Anglesea Area, including Pt Roadknight and the lunch lookout.
08/10/2010 - 10/10/2010

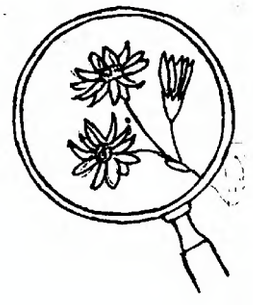
2 Coogoorah Park, Anglesea 09/10/2010

3 Great Otway National Park (Airey's Inlet) 09/10/2010
The Airey's Inlet sewage plant ponds and forest on the way there.

4 Point Addis - Some of these birds I saw on the Friday when I drove down to Anglesea and did the Nature Walk on my own. 10/10/201

Anglesea Weekend 8-10 October 2010 – Orchid List - Loris Peggie

Acianthus caudatus	Mayfly Orchid
Aciantus pusillus	Mosquito Orchid
Caladeni phaeoclavia	Brown-clubbed Spider Orchid (buds)
Caladenia cardiochila	Thick-lip Caladenia (Heart lip)
Caladenia carnea	Pink Fingers
Caladenia clavigera	Plain Lip Spider Orchid
Caladenia oenchila	Red-lipped Spider Orchid
Caladenia parva	Small Spider Orchid
Caladenia pusilla	Tiny Caladenia
Caladenia tentaculata	Mantis Orchid
Caladenia valida	Robust Spider Orchid
Caladenia venusta	Large White Spider Orchid
Diuris orientis	Donkey/Wallflower Orchid
Glossodia major	Waxlip Orchid
Leptoceras menziesii	Hare Orchid
Microtis unifolia	Common Onion Orchid
Pterostylis melagramma	Tall Greenhood
Pterostylis nana	Dwarf Greenhood
Pterostylis nutans	Nodding Greenhood
Pterostylis sanguinea	Banded Greenhood (seedheads)
Pterostylis sp.Aff plumosa (Anglesea)	Bearded Greenhood
Pyrorchis nigricans	Red Beaks
Thelymitra antennifera	Rabbit Ears
Thelymitra aristata	Great Sun-orchid (advanced buds)
Thelymitra flexuosa	Twisted Sun-orchid
Thelymitra rubra	Salmon Sun-orchid
Many other buds of sun orchids some days from opening	
(All identifications and names used are from '*Orchids of the Anglesea District*' – A field guide – 2nd edition)	



Bunyip State Park - 25th September 2010 – Bird List

Australian Shelduck	Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck	Purple Swamphen
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Crimson Rosella
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Superb Lyrebird
White-throated Treecreeper	Superb Fairy-wren
Lewin's Honeyeater	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater	Spotted Pardalote
White-browed Scrubwren	Large-billed Scrubwren
Brown Thornbill	Striated Thornbill
Eastern Whipbird	Australian Magpie
Pied Currawong	Grey Currawong
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Golden Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush	Grey Fantail
Australian Raven	Eastern Yellow Robin
Bassian Thrush	Silvereye
Red-browed Finch	[31 species]

Field Trip to Crib Point - 24th October 2010 – Orchid List

Thelymitra antennifera	Rabbit ears
Thelymitra flexuosa	Twisted Sun-orchid
Thelymitra juncifolia	(sim. T flexuosa but has a different column)
Thelymitra media	Tall Sun-orchid
Thelymitra aristata	Great Sun-orchid
Thelymitra rubra	Salmon Sun-orchid
Caladenia clavigera	Plain-lip Spider Orchid
Pterostylis tasmanica	Southern Bearded Greenhood
Microtis parviflorus	Slender Onion Orchid
Lyperanthus suaveolens	Brown Beaks (found by the bird group)

Field Trip Badger Weir - 15 January 2011 - Bird List

Crimson Rosella	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	Gang Gang
King Parrot	Lyrebird
Brown Thornbill	Common Bronzewing
Red Wattlebird	Pied Currawong
Grey Fantail	White-throated Treecreeper
Eastern Yellow Robin	Fantail Cuckoo
Eastern Spinebill	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Lewins Honeyeater	Silvereye
Spotted Pardalote	Kookaburra
White-browed Scrubwren	Superb Fairywren
Golden Whistler	[23 species]

Field Trip Reef Island - 12 February 2011 - Bird List

Black Swan	Little Pied Cormorant
Pied Cormorant	Great Cormorant
Royal Spoonbill	White-faced Heron
Australian White Ibis	Red-capped Plover
Red-necked Stint	Pied Oystercatcher
Curlew Sandpiper	Ruddy Turnstone
Pacific Golden Plover	Grey-tailed Tattler
Masked Lapwing	Black-shouldered Kite
Silver Gull	Pacific Gull
Crested Tern	Caspian Tern
Singing Honeyeater	Little Raven
Australian Magpie	[23 species]

Ferals: European Goldfinch, Eurasian Skylark

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

- David Hewitt, February 2011

This summer has been the wettest ever recorded in Victoria and we have had some unusual weather patterns including much of our weather coming from the north-west through the centre of the continent. This seems to have been reflected in some unusual butterfly populations around the metropolitan area of Melbourne.

There seems to have been an unusually large number of the common butterflies in our garden – there have been large numbers of Cabbage Whites, Australian Painted Ladies, Meadow Argus, and Common Browns, as well as the smaller Common Grass-blue and a number of skippers. But on a recent trip to Badger Weir we were surprised to see some much less common species. There were a number of MacLeay's Swallowtails which we have in the past only seen at much higher altitude – they are common at Lake Mountain, Mount Donna Buang and Mount Baw Baw, but we have not seen them in the past five years so close to Melbourne.

Figure 1 MacLeay's Swallowtail

Figure 2 Lesser Wanderer

Figure 3 Small Grass-yellow

Even more surprising were the large number of Lesser Wanderers. Although this butterfly is found throughout Australia, Braby (*The Complete Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia*) suggests that it only occasionally reaches Victoria where breeding populations are not permanently established. It tends to prefer open country in the tropics and dry inland – much different from the environment of Badger Weir!

In the same area we also found the Small Grass-yellow which none of us had seen around Melbourne before. This is described by Braby as being common and widespread but not observed in south-east Victoria, and favouring open-woodland, grassland and shrubland in dry inland areas. It is interesting that the specimen we photographed seems to be the dry-season form, even though we have had a very wet summer.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT (cont)

On a recent Ringwood Field Nats trip to Reef Island in Westernport Bay the Chequered Swallowtail was photographed and it has also been seen on Phillip Island. This is also a widespread species but it prefers, according to Braby, 'usually dry and semi-arid habitats in inland areas, preferring moister areas such as along creeks and rivers or near billabongs, where the usual food plants grow as low-growing perennial legumes.'

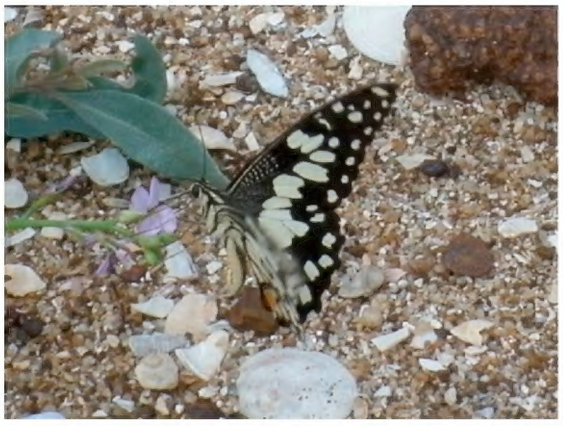


Figure 4 Chequered Swallowtail

Figure 5 Orchard Swallowtail Caterpillar

A number of us have also seen the Orchard Swallowtail in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. This tends to be restricted to the east coast of Australia from Cape York down to the NSW-Victoria border. It probably only arrived in Victoria with the planting of citrus trees, but is not common around Melbourne.

Have these butterflies been blown in by the cyclonic north-westerly winds? How many others have also come?

Natural History down the Microscope - Cecily Falkingham

I have been fascinated by insects for as long as I can remember. Over the years I have used a small microscope to get even closer views of this amazing group of animals.

Recently we were treated to a special night at the Microscopical group attached to the Field Naturalists of Victoria. With a vast array of different-sized microscopes we viewed sand grains that looked like jewels, fungi spores, plant life and a myriad of amazing little creatures from a pond. Tiny ostracods raced around in petri dishes, volvox whirled around with the use of tiny flagella, not much bigger than a pinhead. But the most interesting find for me was a *Polycentropodidae* larvae in the order of *Trichoptera*. How did we know? Part of the fun is looking up these tiny creatures in the books provided from the library. The one we found measured about 18mm and was encased in a clear cream-coloured shelter. Its partly protuding body had six legs and was very active. Caddis-fly predate on other small insects and plant life in ponds (there is even one that tolerates salt water).

(cont p.12)

Natural History down the Microscope (cont)

They decorate their shelters according to species, sometimes in very intricate ways. They can use shells, which are very eye-catching, tiny stones, or sticks (making amazing box shapes) and other available plant material.

If you would like to get up close and personal with insects and other fauna and flora, come and join us on the THIRD WEDNESDAY of the month at FNCV, 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn. Contact Phillipa Sterpin 9598 3231. We are all just a bunch of amateurs, learning as we go along with a few experts to steer us in the right direction.

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 14th – Sunday 15th May 2011 RFNC Weekend at Echuca
Activities: bush parks in and around Echuca (Sat)
Kingfisher Wildlife Cruise (Sun).
As part of our 50th Anniversary year we are planning a weekend at
the Little Desert Lodge.
The dates are: Friday 14th, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th October 2011.
Early booking is recommended

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